



# Senator Margarita Prentice

11th Legislative District

2006 END OF SESSION NEWSLETTER

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Dear Friends:

For the first time in twenty years, the legislature adjourned a day early. On March 8th, we concluded a very successful session.

Thanks for your record number of calls, hotlines, and e-mails. These messages keep me informed of the needs and concerns of our community. The final top 3 topics for this session were:

1. Increasing funding for general healthcare issues (i.e. nursing home care, health coverage for kids, etc.).
2. Supporting the Fair Share Health Care Act (SB 6356/ HB 2517) requiring larger employers to pay a portion of employee health insurance (these bills are no longer active).
3. Supporting and opposing HB 2661, which prohibits discrimination in housing, employment and insurance based on sexual orientation (this bill has been signed by the governor).

This is my report to you on what we did on issues directly affecting our residents. Please feel free to contact me on these or other issues of interest so more information can be provided to you.

Sincerely,

*Margarita Prentice*

## Health Care

### Mental Health

The delivery of mental health services for people with severe and persistent mental illness will be improved. State hospital responsibilities are more clearly defined, nurses are held accountable for hospital admissions, and mental health community options are expanded with new programs developed. Five additional mental health wards will also be opened and I will be visiting as many as possible before next session. **\$31.1 million**

### Medicare Part D Prescription Co-Pays

Thanks to the efforts by Governor Gregoire, low-income seniors affected by the implementation of the new federal prescription drug benefit in January will be fully funded. Close to 100,000 residents were transferred from the Medicaid program to Medicare for their prescription drug coverage creating dual co-pays \$1 or \$5 for their medicines. It's important we all continue to work together to help those affected by this plan. **\$18.2 million**



### Nursing Home Payment Rates

After no money for several years, a much needed 6 percent increase is given in nursing homes payments over the next year. **\$10.1 million**



## Health Care (continued)

### Basic Health Plan

There will be 6,500 slots added to the Basic Health Plan for low-income families bringing the total enrollment to 106,500. **\$12.5 million**

### Healthcare Coverage for Children

An additional 10,000 children will be funded in the Immigrant Children's Health Program. This keeps us on track to provide all children in our state with health care coverage by 2010. **\$7.3 million**

### Breast & Cervical Cancer Screening

A 25 percent increase for screening in low-income, uninsured women will assist in early detection and treatment for breast and cervical cancer. **\$1.7 million**



### Safe Patient Handling Law

This session we passed the first legislation in the United States that requires hospitals to provide mechanical lift equipment for the safe lifting and movement of patients. HB 1672 was signed into law by Governor Gregoire March 8, 2006.

### Bird Flu

The bird flu is expected to strike later this year and local health districts will be expected to develop an emergency response plan by January 2007 to properly deal with outbreaks. The situation will then be evaluated for further need of resources. **\$2 million**

## Emergency Management & Preparedness

The Enhanced 911 Advisory Committee is extended for five years; and the State Interoperability Executive Committee has been directed to coordinate the purchase state of the art equipment for all state wireless radio communications systems. **\$2 million**

## Fraud Prevention

New technology, investigations, and the development of a new fraud detection unit are funded to assess and stop fraud before it happens. **\$3.3 million**

## Internet Gambling

Senate Bill 6613 prohibits the Lottery Commission from offering online games or tickets. It also requires a 60 percent affirmative vote of the Legislature to allow any future online gambling.

## Employment

### Unemployment Insurance

SB 6885 will increase employee benefits and reduce employer's unemployment insurance taxes. Laid-off workers will no longer risk drastic reductions of benefits; and, businesses are projected to save \$300 million over the next eight years.

### Collective Bargaining for Family Child-Care Providers

Licensed family home providers care for nearly 25 percent of the children in state subsidized care. They are now able to bargain collectively for items such as pay, health and welfare benefits, professional development, training, and grievance procedures.

## Environment

### E-waste

SB 6428 requires electronic manufacturers to set up collection and



recycling programs in every county to properly dispose of e-waste – the dangerous heavy metals found in TV's, computers and monitors.

### Renewable Fuels

SB 6508 developed a minimum renewable fuel content requirements and fuel quality standards in the alternative fuels market. By the end of 2008, all automotive fuels sold in our state are required to contain at least 2 percent bio-fuels – either biodiesel (made from vegetable oil) or denatured ethanol in gasoline.

### Puget Sound Clean Up

The Puget Sound will be protected, restored, and revitalized through better oil-spill response, wastewater treatment, toxic site cleanup and salmon restoration. **\$57 million**

## Veterans

### Veterans Innovations Program

The Veterans Innovations Program is implemented to provide additional assistance to veterans who have returned from serving in recent military action. This includes crisis and emergency relief, education, training and employment assistance, and one-time financial hardship grants of up to \$500 for education, employment, healthcare and housing.

### Home Down-Payment Assistance



HB 2471 provides a down-payment assistance homeownership program for veterans. An individual must be a Washington veteran, members and/or former members of

the Washington National Guard and Reserve; and/or a widow or dependent child of a deceased, eligible veteran.

### Exposure to Depleted Uranium

A task force has been created to initiate a health registry, develop an outreach plan, and prepare a report with recommendations for Washington state members of the National Guard who may have been exposed to depleted uranium in the first Gulf War, in Iraq, or Afghanistan.

## Elections

### Primary Election Date Changed

The state primary election date has been changed from the third Tuesday in September to the third Tuesday in August. This gives enough time between the primary and general elections for our military and other overseas absentee voters to receive their ballots.



### Absentee Ballot Notification

HB 2695 requires that auditors notify voters whose signatures on absentee ballots don't match their signatures on record by mail to make sure the absentee ballots are authentic. In certain circumstances, this can be done by telephone.

## Communities

### Minor League Baseball Stadiums

Funding is provided for the Tacoma Rainiers, the Spokane Indians, the Tri-Cities Dust Devils, the Yakima Bears, and the Everett AquaSox to properly restore and repair their minor league baseball facilities. **\$7 million**

### State Park Fees Eliminated

HB 2416 repealed the \$5 fee in response to a dramatic decrease in state park attendance.



## Education

### Improving the Learning Environment

The late

Representative June Leonard used to say, "hungry kids can't learn." That's precisely why additional funds have been allocated for our school breakfast programs. **\$2 million**

### Child Care Career and Wage Ladder

The child care career and wage ladder program, established by the 2005 Legislature, has been funded this year. This program allows licensed child care centers to receive some funding to base wages upon experience, education, and responsibility. **\$1 million**

### Workforce Training

Through the Opportunity Grant Program, low-income students can participate in a pilot work force education program where they receive training in new marketable skills. **\$4 million**

### I-732

The cost-of-living adjustment for K-12 employees for the 2006-07 school year is increased from 1.7 percent to 2.8 percent plus an additional .5 percent salary increase for state funded K-12 employees during the 2006-07 school year.

### Community College Part-Time Employee Health Benefits

Part-time college faculty who work less than half-time for one quarter in the three preceding the summer will now be able to keep their health benefits if they work an average of half time or more for the previous two years. **\$1.5 million**

### WASL Legislation

This year's high school seniors who are not able to meet academic standards set by the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) will receive additional instruction through tutoring, summer school, and before and after-school assistance. **\$28 million**

## Judiciary

### Sex Offenders

A large sex offender package was funded this year that increases penalties for failing to register, possession of child pornography, and crimes committed with sexual motivation. **\$6.1 million**



### Felony DUI

HB 3317 changes driving under the influence (DUI) conviction to a class C felony if the offender has committed

four or more prior offenses within 10 years; or has been convicted of vehicular homicide while under the influence of alcohol/drugs or vehicular assault while under the influence of alcohol/drugs.

### Criminal Justice Training Commission

Without allocating additional funds for the Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC), no new law enforcement would have been trained for six months. This money will keep the Basic Law Enforcement Academies (BLEA) and the CJTC running, as well as conducting a survey of local law enforcement and state agencies to better project future cadet enrollments for the next biennium. **\$900,000**

### Costco Lawsuit Legislation

SB 6823 gives out-of-state wineries and breweries the same three options for getting their products to retailers that in-state producers have: take the product directly to the retailer; use a distributor; or require a retailer to arrange pickup and delivery.

### Equal Rights

HB 2661 adds "sexual orientation" to race, creed, color, sex, national origin and age that are protected from discrimination in real estate, employment, insurance and banking.

## Agriculture

### Raw Milk

SB 6377 increases penalties for selling milk from an unlicensed dairy farm to prevent illnesses such as E. coli.

### Fuel Sales to Farmers

HB 2424 offers fuel sales and use tax exemptions to the agricultural industry to help sustain family farms. Red-dyed, clear diesel, and aircraft fuel sold for soil preparation, crop cultivation and harvesting, are also exempt from the sales and use tax.



## Transportation

### Regional Transportation

Under HB 2871, the slow down of transportation projects is eliminated by doing away with competition between road and transit initiatives. Both the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) and Sound Transit are partnered on the federal state level by requiring each of them to propose projects for a single 2007 ballot. Both measures must pass for either to be approved. A new commission will devise a central independent and non-partisan governing body for regional transportation.

### Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVET)

SB 6247 revises the formula so the local MVET vehicle valuation is more accurate. Small trucks and cars are valued at 85 percent of the Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price reflecting the prices consumers actually pay.

## Capital Budget

Projects for the 11th District through the Department of Community, Trade, & Economic Development (CTED):

- Food Bank Refrigeration in White Center: **\$65,000**
- Public Works Trust Fund Loan: Val Vue SD 2006 Sanitary Sewer Rehabilitation: **\$3,554,700**

## Grant Programs

That have potential interest for the 11th District:

- Grants and loans for septic tank improvements – Department of Ecology (DOE);
- Drinking Water Assistance Program - Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED);
- Energy Freedom Program low-interest loan program for renewable energy projects – Department of Agriculture (DOA);
- Housing assistance, weatherization, and affordable housing programs – CTED;
- Youth Athletic Field grants (subject to private matching money to fill the fund) – Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC);
- Local Toxics Grants for Cleanup and Prevention, specifically for coordinated prevention grants for local government solid and hazardous waste planning, household and small business hazardous waste collection and disposal, recycling capital purchases and program development, and local solid waste enforcement – DOE;
- 2-1-1 Social Service Information Phone System – Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS);
- School Mapping School Safety Mapping Projects – Criminal Justice Training Commission;
- Waste Tire Clean Up Initiative – DOE;
- Family Forest Fish Blockages Program – IAC;
- Various recreation programs – IAC;
- Salmon Recovery Grants – IAC;

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## Grant Programs

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- Schoolroom Acoustic Grants for pilot projects – State Board of Education;
- Septic tank improvement grants and loans – DOE ;
- Local Innovative Storm Water Grants for Puget Sound local governments to fund innovative, low-impact development storm water management projects – DOE; and
- Watershed Plan Implementation and Flow Achievement, specifically for watershed planning in King County – DOE.

## Outline of New Amounts for Competitive Grant Programs for the 2007-09 Biennium

- Heritage Capital Projects Program, The Washington State Historical Society (Sections 231-32, increased from 4 million to 10 million dollars)
- Community Services Facilities Program, CTED (Section 233, increased from 4 million to 10 million dollars)
- Youth Recreation Facilities Program, CTED (Section 234, increased from 2 million to 8 million dollars)
- Building for the Arts Program, CTED (Section 235, increased from 4 million to 12 million dollars)
- Housing Trust Fund Assistance Programs, CTED (Sections 108 and 236)



Senator Prentice with Alex Leonard, Liberty High School



Brittany Cruz  
Lindbergh High School



Chris Foster  
Kent-Meridian High School



Jessica Groesz  
St. Anthony's High School

## Thanks to Our Senate Pages

It is always a pleasure to have students from our local schools serve as Senate pages. They are in Olympia for a week working within the Legislature. A student must be 14 years old but not yet 17 by the time he or she pages. Applications are accepted on a first come first served basis and are available through my office or online at <http://www1.leg.wa.gov/Senate/Administration/PageProgram/senpageapplication.htm>



Arianna Woltkamp  
Aviation High School



Sarah Zayic  
Aviation High School